



Summary :

Chalki (Heybeliada), stretching over 2.5 square kilometers, is the second largest island of the Princes' Islands complex, located between Antigoni (Burgazada), Pringipos (Büyükada) and Cape Maltepe on the coast of Asia Minor. For many centuries, the history of Chalki was closely related to the history of its great monasteries. Until the middle of the 19th century, the majority of the inhabitants were Greek fishermen. Nowadays, its Christian Orthodox population numbers around 100 people.

Other Names

Heybeliada

Geographical Location

Princes' Islands

Historical Region

Propontis (Marmara Sea)

Administrative Dependence

Constantinople Metropolitan Municipality (İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi)

1. Location

Chalki, stretching over 2.5 square kilometers, is the second largest island of the Princes' Islands complex, located between [Antigoni](#) (Burgazada), [Pringipos](#) (Büyükada) and Cape Maltepe on the coast of Asia Minor. It lies 10 miles from the port of [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul) and 2.5 from Maltepe, while its highest altitude reaches 448 ft. It is called Heybeliada in Turkish because of its saddle-bag (heybe) shape.¹ The name Chalki “remained because of the copper, which was mined there in the past”.² With regard to the name’s etymology, other opinions have been also expressed: “It was thus named either because of the copper mined there in the past or because of the Chalkis river flowing from Chalcedon”.³

Petrus Gyllius (1499-1555) records the Chalki settlement in his travelogue,⁴ while Eremya Çelebi Kömürçiyân mentions the monasteries of the Princes' Islands, adding though that the islands’ settlements were often plundered by crews of the Ottoman fleet.⁵

2. Population

There were no more than 800 inhabitants in Chalki in the beginning of the 19th century. Half a century later, however, in 1875, they reached 3,500, including the students in its great schools.⁶ Until the middle of the 19th century Chalki’s population was constituted in its greater part by Greeks. In 1951, however, according to estimates by the newspaper *Makedonia*, the local Greek community was comprised of 800 individuals.⁷ A few years later, in 1955, according to data provided by Christophoros Christidis from his personal archive, the aforementioned community operated a six-grade elementary school, an educational association and a philanthropic confraternity.⁸ Nowadays, around 100 Orthodox Christians inhabit the island.⁹



Until the middle of the 19th century, the majority of Chalki's inhabitants were fishermen, while vineyards and olive trees were also cultivated on the island. Skarlatos Byzantios records the following with regard to the Chalki settlement: "The village, on the other hand, lies by the East shore, while its anchorage is a makeshift enclosed quayside, which was maybe in a better condition in the past. Its inhabitants, who amounted to 800 people only 40 years ago, involve themselves almost exclusively with ferriage and fishery and have all the virtues and flaws of the Katastenios ferrymen, distinguished by a certain dragging tone in their voice".¹⁰

In the middle of the 19th century, with the arrival of the steamboat, the establishment of regular routes and the foundation of important educational establishments, the island gradually evolved into a significant intellectual centre and a resort for the wealthy Constantinopolitans. Thus, the old community of fishermen and wine producers was transformed into a fashionable social milieu. As recorded in the *Historical and Geographical Dictionary* by Voutyras and Karydis, Chalki "became the most famous of the Princes' Islands about 50 years ago, renowned for its two grand National Academies, the Commercial and the Theological one, as well as the Imperial Naval Academy; all three were advancing and flourishing, while every year in neighbouring Pringipos – as stated by a friend who taught there – the rich were concerned with transforming the rocks and shores into the Hanging Gardens of Babylon."¹¹

3. Religion

3.1. Holy Trinity Monastery

For many centuries, the history of Chalki was closely related to the history of its great monasteries. It is still unknown when the Holy Trinity monastery was built, but, according to tradition, Patriarch Photius I (second half of the 9th century) appears as its founder. It is possible that the monastery was built in the early 9th century and was restored by Photios.¹² Despite having suffered heavy damages during the [Fall of Constantinople](#), it was restored in 1540 by Patriarch-to-be [Metrophanes III](#). At that time the monastery's marvellous library was also constructed. Later on, in 1772, it was renovated by the Chian monk and Abbot Samuel the Deaf. Completely rebuilt in 1843, the church of Holy Trinity is a **three-aisled basilica**.

3.2. The monastery of Virgin Mary Kamariotissa

Another significant Chalki monastery was that of the Virgin Mary Kamariotissa. According to tradition, some monks formed a monastery in the area in the 11th century. On the same spot, Emperor [John VIII Palaiologos](#) built in the 15th century a church and a monastery dedicated to St John the Forerunner. Finally, the complex became known as the monastery of Virgin Mary Kamariotissa, by a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, whose bell hung from a stone arch. In 1796, the Prince Alexandros Ypsilantis rebuilt the monastery and endowed it with rich dependencies in Bucharest and [Proti](#). However, after the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence, the [Patriarchate](#) undertook its administration. The Commercial Academy had been accommodated in the monastery's buildings between the years 1831 and 1916, while an All-Girls Orphanage also operated on the premises (1919-1942). In 1916 the building was taken by the Naval Ministry in order to house the Naval Academy (the Imperial Naval Academy had relocated on the island from Kasımpaşa during the 1840s). The [Patriarchate](#), however, managed to regain the control of the monastery and established there the National Shelter for orphan girls and refugees from Asia Minor. Finally, though, it was occupied by the Turkish government in 1942 and became an outlier for the local Naval Academy.¹³



3.3. St George Monastery

The St George Monastery, **dependency of the Holy Sepulchre**, is located on the eastern part of the island opposite Pringipos. It was also called St George of the Cliffs, because its cells seem suspended hanging over the cliffs of the steep shore. The specific date of its foundation is undetermined, but it most likely exists since the Byzantine period. The building standing today, however, was constructed in the second half of the 16th century. In 1758 it was rebuilt from scratch by the metropolitan, and later Patriarch, Ioannikios Karatzas. After his dethronement, Ioannikios became the proprietor of the monastery and before his passing dedicated it to the Holy Sepulchre; thus it became its **dependency**. During the time of the Turkish Republic, the Naval Academy seized all of the monastery's property, including the holy **water fountain** of St Fotini and the cemetery; that meant that the monastery's possessions were restricted within the church's precinct.¹⁴

3.4. St Spyridon Monastery

The St Spyridon monastery is located on the eastern "pounta", the steep cape that defines the Çam Limanı, the picturesque port of the island. The monastery was constructed by the ascetic monk Arsenios Ganochoritis, who in 1868 build the first scete in the area, dedicated to St Spyridon. The scete was completely destroyed in the 1894 earthquake, but Arsenios managed to restore it to the shape is has nowadays, thanks to the contribution of many wealthy Orthodox Christians. After the passing of Arsenios (1906), the monastery was recognised as **patriarchal monastery** (stauropegion).¹⁵

3.5. The St Nicholas Church

The island's communal church is dedicated to St Nicholas, protector of sailors, since most of its inhabitants were mariners and involved in fishery. It is located in the village's main square and was built in 1857.¹⁶

Until 1923, Chalki and the rest of the Princes' Islands fell under the ecclesiastical administration of the [diocese of Chalkedon](#); since 1924, however, the diocese of the Princes' Islands was established.

4. Cemetery – Holy water fountain

In a small distance from the St Spyridon monastery, in the southern part of the island, Chalki's cemetery and St Barbara's chapel are located. The St Barbara Confraternity played an important part in enclosing the cemetery and constructing the chapel, which was built by the [architect](#) Dimitrios Panagiotidis.¹⁷

The St Niketas holy water fountain, one of the most historical pilgrimages for the inhabitants of Chalki, as well as the land it was located upon, were commandeered in 1800 in order to build the Imperial Naval Academy. Until 1922, the Academy's administration allowed the priest to sing Mass once a year, on September 15th. Finally, in 1930 the holy water fountain's entrance was sealed off with bricks and admission was prohibited. Two other fountains are also mentioned, that of St Paraskevi, close to the St Nicholas church, and that of St Eyphemia.¹⁸



5. Education

5.1. Theological Academy

In 1844, under the tenure of Patriarch Germanos I, the Holy Trinity Monastery began to house the [Theological School](#). The building accommodating the academy, however, was ruined in the 1894 earthquake. As a result, a new building was constructed in 1896 by [Periklis Photiadis](#).¹⁹

Since 1923, the Academy's deans also serve as abbots in the Holy Trinity monastery. Between 1844 and 1919, the Academy had seven grades: four high-school and three theological ones. In 1919-1923, the high school department was suspended and the academy functioned as a five-grade Theological Faculty. In 1923, it returned to its seven-grade form and in 1951 another year was added to the theological department. In 1971, however, the theological department was closed down by decree of the Turkish government.²⁰

5.2. Communal school

In 1907, the communal school building was constructed. The number of students attending the communal educational establishments in Chalki is indicative of the level of the offered education, as well as the community's demographic course. In 1923, 275 students in total were registered. In 1933, their number dropped to 150. During the 1951-1952 school year, the total of students was 66, and 64 in 1961-1962. One decade later, during the school year 1971-1972, the number had crumbled to 26. In 1979 there were only 8 students attending the school, which closed down the following year.²¹

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Glossary :

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| | agiasma The holy water (as well as the sacred place from where the water spurts), which the faithful drink, sprinkle or wash themselves in order to be healed. |
| | fraternal order of the Holy Sepulchre It was founded in 326 AD. Its aim was to provide service for the pilgrimages to the Holy Land. It is mentioned in fermans of the 15th century. The essential duty of the members of the order of the Holy Sepulchre were the travels for the financial support of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. After a period of time they determined the routes followed, and as a result, the areas that each group of monks had to cover, which were also called "travels". According to code 622 of the metochion of the Holy Sepulchre of Constantinople, the "travel" of Smyrna included in the period 1707-173, the dioceses of Ephesus, Smyrna, Methymna, Lemnos, Mytilene, and Philadelphia, as well as the archdiocese of Samos and Ikaria. |
| | metochion In the Byzantine period, <i>metochion</i> meant the estate that was conceded to a monastery for income purposes and operated as its dependency. Usually the <i>metochia</i> were located far from the monastery to which they belonged and included various structures, such as churches, hospices etc. |
| | patriarchal monastery (stauropegion) A monastery under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate, autonomous from the administration of the local bishop. The term stauropegion applied also to villages, meaning that in tax matters (mostly in regard to ecclesiastical taxes) they were under the control of the Patriarchate and not of the local diocese. |
| | three-aisled basilica An oblong type of church internally divided into three aisles: the middle and the two side aisles. The middle aisle is often lighted by an elevated clerestory. In the Early Byzantine years this type of church had huge dimensions. |

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